

The Use of Persuasive Technique Misrepresents the Real Culture of an Odiyan: A Critical Analysis of the Movie *Odiyan*

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Abstract

The purpose of literary narratives and film narratives are to entertain and aware society. The only difference between literary narratives from film narratives is literary narratives visualise the incidents and events through words that have to be converted into visualisation by the readers whereas film narratives can directly visualise events. So, film narratives are more powerful than literary narratives. The present scenario is much indebted to media than literary texts hence the media manipulates matter and manners which mislead society in the wrong direction. Films are handled with different themes such as history, culture, tradition, communities, etc. But nowadays films give a wrong persuasion to the audience because they aim to make movies as blockbusters particularly the film narratives in indigenous communities' culture. The recent movie *Odiyan* unfolds the theme of the indigenous culture of an Odiyan who is persuaded in a wrong way through this movie. Some literary narratives are there to discuss the Odiyans, but most of the people are not much aware of these particular indigenous figures because they are considered myths. The present study focuses on how the film *Odiyan* misrepresent the culture and custom of Odiyans and this misleads the audience in a wrong way by using the persuasive technique.

Key words: Film narratives, Literary narratives, indigenous culture, indigenous community, persuasive technique

Introduction

Indian film industry is the second largest film industry after Hollywood. Cinema, in India, is produced at its maximum than any other country. Films acted as a pivotal role in ordinary lives than literary narratives. Indian cinema is divided into two categories such as popular movies and art films. Art films prioritise particular aesthetics while popular films are produced for the masses in its art objects are missing out. The influence of films in society plays an important role to mould the culture of a society just like literary works. In India like country where once existed multiple uncultured practices that had been practicing for long years. Literary authors penned on all these societal issues through their works but those works could aware only those who are literate. The large number of common people still followed the barbarian lifestyle. In this context films could take the reformatory role in society where majority of them were illiterate or lack of opportunity for reading.

Cinema and Literary Narratives

Comparatively film narratives are so strong and effective than literary narratives because films can enter into the lowest strata of society. Conversely, Patrick Colm Hogan remarks that Indian movies are tangled one just like the literary narratives. They also required the same attention, reflection and interpretation (Hogan,2008). This remark is quite indigestible because several films have been reacted against social anarchism that had been prevailed in India. So, in this sense cinema can influence the thinking level of the people and it also can transform society and social trends (UKEssays, 2018). In India regional films enhance the aesthetic sense of the concerned states that help to comprehend the wide variety of culture and customs. Cinematic visuals are more effective than literary words. Many films have been produced so far as its central theme is culture. But the real culture is often missed out while the film is screened in the silver line. It is mainly the filmmaker's wish to twist the real culture to make the movie more interesting and through this, he gives a wrong persuasion of the particular culture to audience. The current paper analyses how the culture of Odiyan deviates from the reality in the 2018 released movie *Odiyan*.

Trailers act as a successful formula for each movie so, generally it will be released before the release of each movie. These trailers can influence and attract the masses. The trailers include attractive scenes which create persuasion among the

people about the movie. The movie *Odiyan* has several advertisements, trailers and stills that could easily attract the viewers most notably its stardom. The trailers and advertisements had created a curiosity among the people because most of the people came to know about Odiyans at this time only. This is because no one had tried to screen the real culture of an Odiyan other than the literary work of P. Kannankutty's *Odiyan*. Odiyans were common in northern part of Kerala so, people from this region were familiar with Odiyans. Several stories on Odiyans have been propagated through orally in this region.

The movie *Odiyan* was starred by Mohan Lal played the title role of an Odiyan Manikyan. The trailers and promos of this movie gave enthusiasm to the common people because of the stardom of Mohanlal. Hence, people's level of expectation was high and this was accelerated by the promos and advertisements. When the trailers had released people began to search who the Odiyan was. They collected all the relevant details about Odiyans and before the release of the movie most of the people were familiar with these figures. But the film was quite contrary to all the promotions and advertisements and it disappointed its spectators.

The movie *Odiyan* can be categorised as a folklore movie that talks about the folkloric element of an odiyan, a popular figure who reigned the Kerala society during the 1950s and 60s especially the northern Kerala. The real purpose of folkloric films is to produce for better documentation or future use or research purposes. The term folklore film is coined by Sharon Sherman (Palakkal,2019). But the movie *Odiyan* cannot be included in any of these categories as it has deviated from the actual folklore of an Odiyan. The folklore of an Odiyan goes like this. The word *odi* means to break something. Normally, Odiyans break the spinal code or nerves of the enemy and from this they got the name Odiyan. Shapeshifting was one of the types of the *odi*. So, all the details about Odiyans that gained people from different sources make the people more thrilling and they eagerly waited for the release. Many literary narratives are there that discuss the real Odiyans. The movie failed to stick to the real folklore instead it concentrated the commercial success. If any movie has folkloric content can be described as the folkloric one, that focuses on the individual performer, the community and its culture and texts and artefacts (Palakkal, 2019).

As far as the Indian film industry is concerned it is the biggest film-producing country in the world. Movies can also be considered as cultural artefacts like any other art form (K. R, 2020). Histories and myths often become the central theme for films and such films pay much attention to retaining the originality at its maximum. The regional Malayalam film industry has witnessed many such movies such as *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* (1989), *Pazhassi Raja* (2009), *Kayamkulam Kochunni* (2018), etc. The movie *Pulijanmam* (2006) directed by Priyanandan who discussed one of the folkloric themes that was Pulimaranja Thondachan who was considered as God of the Pulaya community. Pulimaranja Thondachan had some supernatural abilities and it was believed that he knew *Odividhya* also. The director could pay justice to this movie because he studied it well before the execution of the movie but V. A. Sreekumar Menon failed to bring the real Odiyan into the silver screen. The folk tales open a new window of culture in front of the spectators through which one can understand the tradition, culture and custom of a particular community.

Who an Odiyan is?

Odiyans were black magicians and almost all the known Odiyans were cruel people. In the period when Odiyans were believed to have existed both men and women were afraid to enter outside after dusk. Odiyans used a special kind of oil which was made from four or five-month grown up foetus. Odiyans noted the pregnant women at their first pregnancy. They attracted the women by chanting some mantras and brought them to a pre-fixed spot where they took the foetus out from the womb and they collected the amniotic fluid from the foetus. After that, the woman went back to her home and the next day, she would be found dead by bleeding. Odiyans added some medicinal plants in the amniotic fluid by chanting some mantras. They applied this oil on the back part of their ear at the time of the *odi* performance. During this time, they can be transformed into an animal that they wished to be. They can transform into animals like cats, dogs, buffalo, etc. but these animal forms have some kind of deformities like a one-eyed dog, tailless cat, hornless buffalo etc. Odiyans did the black magic *odi* for the landlords to kill their enemies. This is the basic history of Odiyans and these details circulated from generation to generation but all these notes were absent from the movie. This history is known to a small number of people because this is the history of lower caste communities. So, most of the stories of Odiyans propagated orally. Unwritten histories are more valuable and beautiful than the written. In this context, the theme of the movie is a novel one and the movie would have become a remarkable one in the history of cinema if the director had given much attention to the real face of an Odiyan. Normally, the presiding culture has supremacy in blockbuster films and the indigenous cultures get rare opportunities to bring their real culture (Bickford & Warren, 2020).

Misrepresentation of the movie *Odiyan*

The director failed to visualise the real Odiyan through the character of Mohanlal. The character of Odiyan took different animal forms but all were in a masked form of animals. Odiyans had special abilities and powers and the movie itself supported this notion but it is failed to bring all these under visualisation. The character Odiyan got a lot of build ups in his special powers but in reality, all are in vain (Arikatla, 2018). The filmmaker gave a false notion on *Odividhya*, the black magic performed by the Odiyans. Odiyans need a kind of oil that is extracted from four or five-month grew up foetus for performing this *odi*. Odiyans were known as the king of darkness because the black magic was being performed only at night times. They appeared in a disguised form of animal and attack the enemy. But in this movie, *Odividhya* is shown merely as an *iruttadi* (beat in the darkness) (Bharadwaj, 2018). The director has led the audience through his wrong execution of an erstwhile culture. Odiyans had a distinctive culture that is not properly narrated in this movie. A few literary texts and folklores were discussed about the actual face of an Odiyan. It seems that the director as well as the scriptwriter did not pay much attention to know more about Odiyans. They make this movie just for commercial purposes and not to bring the unique identity of Odiyans. The black magic *odi* was a skilled art and it needed continuous practice. There was great effort behind the performance of the black magic. The *odi* can be included in the list of martial arts.

One of the reviews about this movie in the Hindustan Times remarks that the director did not highlight the good and moral side of the character Manikyan in the entire film (Sundar, 2018). But when compare the real Odiyan with Manikyan, the director presented a kind hearted Odiyan. If he visualised the real Odiyan, it would have affected the stardom of Mohan Lal. The potential for shapeshifting made Odiyans famous. This movie had highlighted this skill occasionally but failed to bring it in front of the spectators in its actual sense. Here *Odividhya*, the ability to shapeshift into an animal presented merely as a fancy dress (Viswanath, 2018).

Conclusion

The soil of Kerala is rich with folklore, anecdotes, superstitious beliefs, cultures and traditions. But most of the details are not documented properly particularly the details of Odiyans. The remaining details on them were passed on orally and based on these oral stories some literary narratives also had produced. So, the director must have studied about Odiyans and their culture properly and then if he had made the particular movie, it would have become a classic one in the history of Malayalam cinema. The film was released in 2018 on December 14 worldwide and this movie is also released in the dubbed versions in Tamil and Telugu languages. The filmmakers should have adequate knowledge while directing folkloric themes. In films, persuasion is always an active element. Through this movie, the director gave a wrong perception of an Odiyan who belonged to the indigenous communities to his audience as well as his nation.

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